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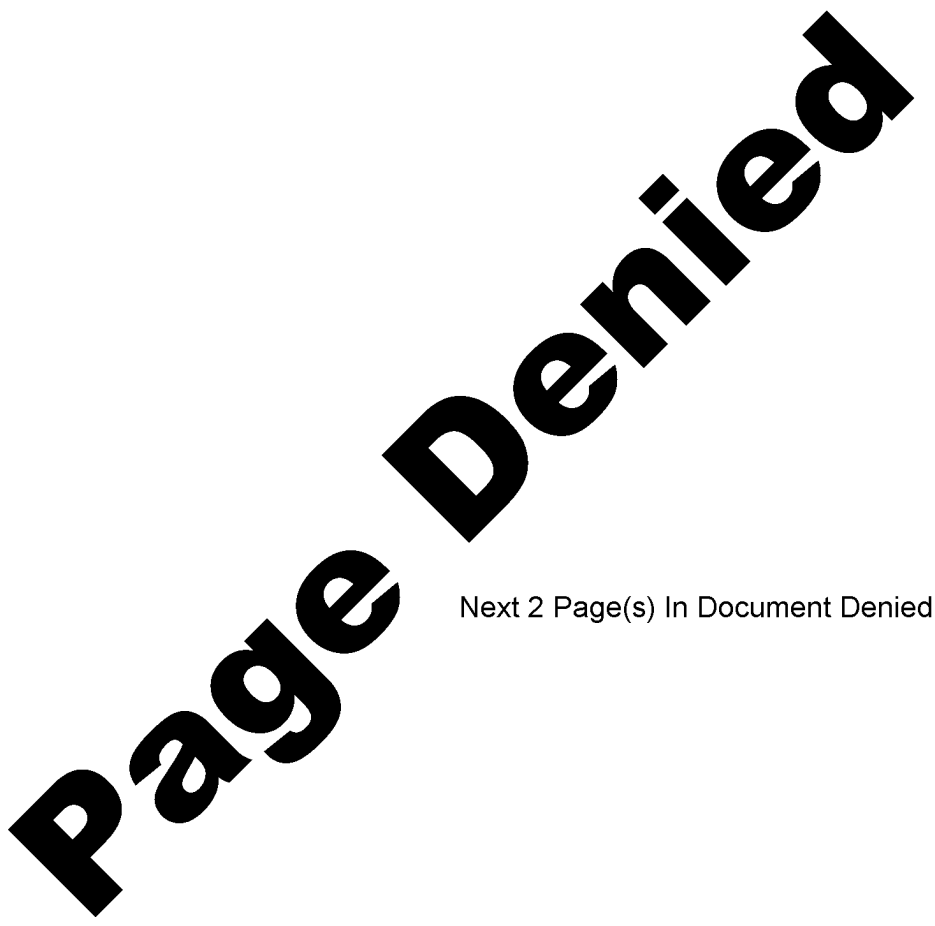

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MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Once More on the Modern Concept and Classification of Theaters of Military Operations

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Once More on the Modern Concept and Classification of Theaters of Military Operations

by

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The postwar period has been marked by fundamental changes in the military-political and strategic conditions of conducting a modern war, which also makes it imperative to change the system of theaters of military operations.

The question of the need to study this problem was correctly presented in an article by a group of authors as well as in comments on the article published in the Collections of the Journal'Military Thought''*, and an attempt was made to examine a number of its aspects. However, these works did not adequately describe the features which define modern theaters of military operations as a strategic category nor the elements which comprise the essence of theaters of military operations. We therefore feel it necessary to fill this gap.

The appearance of missile/nuclear weapons having a practically unlimited range of destruction led to an expansion of the spatial scope of a war to global dimensions. This same circumstance extended the limits of a strategic operation, which may now encompass an entire continent.

Therefore, we may divide theaters of military operations into continental and oceanic with respect to the nature of the sphere and surface, and into main and secondary with respect to their strategic importance. With regard to the spatial scope and conditions of the employment of strategic means of combat, there arises the need to establish the concept of an intercontinental theater of military operations. This is a territory encompassing several continents located in different hemispheres with the oceans separating them and the air and outer space adjacent to them, within the limits of which a war will be conducted employing strategic missile/nuclear and space means of armed combat.

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* Collection of Articles of the Journal'Military Thought'', No. 3 (73), 1964 and No. 2 (75), 1965.

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Despite the extreme diversity of the conditions of conducting armed combat in the different theaters of military operations, there is a certain generality among them which stems from the presence of a series of similar features characteristic of each of them to a lesser or greater extent. Let us examine these features.

Military-Political. The presence within the limits of a theater of military operations of states belonging to opposing military-political groupings (as it applies to the socialist camp and the United States, this feature is expressed in the framework of an intercontinental theater of military operations). In addition, they may include neutralist countries which could possibly represent targets for capture by aggressor nations during a war, which could result in counteractions by other nations.

Strategic. The presence of important strategic areas (targets), the capture or destruction of which may be a strategic mission in operations; their spatial dimensions creating the necessary operational-tactical capacity and permitting the deployment of large strategic groupings and the conduct of strategic operations.

Military-geographic. The presence of conditions that permit the dispersed and concealed basing of large strategic groupings equipped with modern means of armed combat, and their massed employment; a certain generality of geographic conditions creating the necessity for employing the appropriate types of armed forces, and methods of conducting armed combat and organizing the troops.

Military-economic. The location in a theater of military operations of important industrial areas or large deposits of strategic raw materials required for the support of military production, food and important resources, as well as production and repair enterprises which support the supply of the troops and the repair of military equipment using local means.

Each theater of military operations includes a number of component elements which characterize its strategic nature and significance. These include: strategic areas -- a part of the territory (or water area) having an important military, economic or military-political value, the capture of which may be one of the aims of a strategic operation or an entire war, and strategic axes -- a broad band of the earth's surface (land water area) and adjacent water areas (coastal areas) and air and outer space; within these axes are situated the important strategic areas of the potential enemy, the capture of which, or destruction of strategic targets

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within which, may be one of the tasks of the strategic operation.

On the basis of its military-geographic conditions and spatial dimensions, the strategic axis must permit the coordinated actions of large groupings of the Strategic Rocket Forces, several front-size operational formations of ground forces, the navy, air forces, and the Air Defense Forces of the Country.

As a result of the introduction of the concept of an intercontinental theater of military operations, it becomes necessary to define an intercontinental strategic axis; this is a vast zone which includes the basing areas of one's own intercontinental means and the areas of important enemy targets on another continent against which strikes by these means are planned, as well as a broad band of land and ocean area and the air and outer space contiguous to it through which the flight paths (trajectories) of intercontinental means will pass.

Based on the above features characterizing the theaters of military operations and taking into consideration the present alignment of forces in peacetime and the conditions and nature of conducting armed combat employing missile/nuclear weapons, we believe that the names and composition of the probable theaters of military operations will be somewhat different.

The continental theaters of military operations may include the following:

The European (Western) Theater of Military Operations. This would include all countries on the European continent (west of the Ural Range), the northern part of Africa and the western part of Asia Minor. The naval part of the theater would include: the Black Sea, Mediterranean and other seas surrounding the European continent,and the gulfs of the Atlantic and Arctic ocean basins.

The importance of this theater centers on the fact that it is here that the two opposing military-political groupings border and face each other: on the one hand, the countries of the imperialist NATO bloc, and on the other -- the socialist nations that were united in 1955 by the Warsaw Pact.

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Two main strategic axes may be identified in this theater: the Western European, including the central and northern part of the European territory north of a line through Kiev, the Carpathians, the Alps, Toulouse, Madrid

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and Cadiz. The most important strategic areas in the foreign part of this axis are: the Scandinavian, the straits zone of the Baltic area, the Central European area, the British Isles area and the area of the Pyrenees Peninsula, and the Southern European, which includes the southern part of Europe, the entire Mediterranean basin and adjacent northern part of Africa and western part of Asia Minor.

The straits zone of the Black Sea together with the Balkan Peninsula, the western part of Asia Minor, the Mediterranean area and the North African area may be listed as important strategic areas in this Southern European strategic axis.

The North American Theater encompasses the territory of North America and the surrounding seas and bays of the Arctic, Atlantic and Pacific basins, Greenland and Iceland and the countries of Central America and the West Indies.

An important role in this theater is played by the United States, where 50 percent of the industrial production, 75 percent of the military production and 90 percent of the nuclear warhead production of the entire capitalist world are concentrated. A weak point in the strategic position of the United States is the extremely high concentration of production and population in relatively confined areas, which makes the country highly vulnerable to nuclear weapons in the event of war. Many types of strategic raw materials are not found in the territory of the United States, which makes them very dependent upon ocean lines of communication.

Canada, which has atomic, aviation and armor industries, is another of the important nations located in this theater.

The following strategic areas may be noted in the North American Theater of Military Operations: in the northern part of the theater -- Alaska and Greenland, and in the central part -- the area of the Great Lakes occupied by five states of the country; the Atlantic coast area, including 15 states and the District of Columbia located along the coast; the coastal areas of the Gulf of Mexico with ten states (along the arc of the Gulf); the Pacific coast area with three states; and the Central area, which includes the remaining 15 states of the United States. 50X1-HUM

Hawaii

The strategic areas listed above are characterized first of all by the presence of large administrative-political, economic and military-industrial centers and seaports. Intercontinental missile bases, strategic air bases and naval bases are deployed within the limits of these

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areas, and government stocks of nuclear weapons are stored here.

There are three strategic areas in the southern part of the theater: Mexico and the countries of Central America, the area of the West Indies, and Cuba.

In the event of a worldwide nuclear war, the North American Theater of Military Operations together with the Atlantic and the European theaters will be the main arena of armed conflict. All other theaters will have secondary importance. The feature common to these theaters is that they contain countries which are rich in natural resources but are poorly developed from an economic standpoint.

The Eastern Theater of Military Operations may include the entire Asiatic part of the Soviet Union east of the Ural Range and north of a line drawn through the Caspian Sea, Lake Balkhash and Vladivostok; a major part of the Chinese People's Republic (north of the Yellow River), the Mongolian People's Republic, the Korean People's Democratic Republic, South Korea and Japan.

This theater of military operations is strategically important because the imperialist bloc headed by the United States has strategic springboards here with a considerable number of armed forces which will be used to carry out aggressive attacks against the socialist countries. If the imperialists unleash a new world war, this may become the second most important strategic front of armed conflict.

Two important strategic areas -- the Chukotsk-Alaskan and the Japanese-Korean, are within the limits of the theater of military operations.

The strategic significance of the Chukotsk-Alaskan area is based on the fact that here the American and Asian continents are separated by the relatively narrow Bering Strait (85 kilometers wide), which makes it possible to move the combat operations of the ground forces to the North American continent without transporting them long distances by sea or by air. In addition, through this area pass the most important part of the USSR's Northern Sea Route as well as the shortest air and sea routes between North America and Asia.

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In the Japanese-Korean area is Japan, which, after the United States, represents the main striking force and the largest military-economic base of the imperialist bloc in the Far East, as well as South Korea -- an

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important strategic springboard of this bloc in East Asia.

Two main strategic axes may be designated in this area: the northeastern, including the northeastern part of the Soviet Union, Alaska, and Canada with the seas and straits surrounding them, and the eastern -- the Soviet Maritime Territory, the northeastern part of the Chinese People's Republic, Sakhalin Island, the Korean Peninsula, the Japanese Islands and the seas and bays surrounding them.

The Southeastern Theater of Military Operations could unite the southeastern part of the Chinese People's Republic (south of the Yellow River), the countries of the Indochina Peninsula, the island of Taiwan, the Philippine Islands, Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand and, in order to cover the adjacent territories of the theater of military operations -- India.

The strategic importance of this theater may be seen in the fact that the countries located within it have enormous resources of strategic raw materials (tin, lead, aluminum, tungsten, chromites, iron and manganese ores and rubber). In addition, Australia and New Zealand are suppliers of grain, high-quality wool, cattle and butter.

Within this theater of military operations the imperialist bloc has important island and mainland springboards where military bases have been established and groupings of armed forces are located which carry out so-called local wars for the purpose of suppressing the national liberation movements of these countries.

This theater includes socialist countries (the Chinese People's Republic and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam), countries of the aggressive blocs (Thailand, the Philippines, South Vietnam, Australia and New Zealand, the Federation of Malaysia), and neutralist countries (Burma, Cambodia, Laos and Indonesia).

The main strategic areas in this theater would be the Philippine-Indochinese-Indonesian area (the island of Taiwan, the Philippines, countries located on the Indochina and Malaysian peninsulas, Indonesia, Singapore, and Sarawak on the island of Borneo, North Borneo and Brunei) and the Australian-New Zealand area.

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This theater would also include one strategic axis -- the Southeastern, which encompasses southern China, the Indochina Peninsula, Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand with the seas and gulfs contiguous to

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them.

Obviously, the South Asian Theater of Military Operations would include the countries of the Near and Middle East -- Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Israel, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, the United Arab Republic, Afghanistan, India, the western provinces of the Chinese People's Republic, Nepal, the British colonies of Aden, Oman and Qatar, as well as the southern territory of the USSR (Northern Caucasus, Transcaucasus, the Central Asiatic Soviet republics and Kazakhstan). At the same time, Turkey and the entire eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea could be placed in the Western (European) Theater of Military Operations, since military operations in the Mediterranean basin will be linked by a unified strategic concept with the operations in this theater.

The strategic importance of this theater of military operations is determined by the following features: first, the territory of the theater is located at the junction of the continents of Europe, Africa and Asia. Through here pass the shortest and most important sea, air and land routes linking Europe and America with the countries of Asia and Africa; second, the countries of the Near East are the main suppliers of oil in the European market; third, the national liberation process and the anti-imperialist and anti-colonial struggle of the peoples is continuing in a number of these countries, which is causing sharp opposition on the part of the imperialist nations and creating a tense situation; and, fourth, a number of countries of the Near and Middle East form part of the aggressive blocs (Turkey, Iran, Pakistan) or support them (Israel), and their territory may be used as a springboard for an attack on the Soviet Union.

The main strategic areas are: the Bosporus-Dardanelles, the Mesopotamian area, the Suez Canal Zone and the mouth of the Red Sea, and the India-Pakistan area.

Two strategic axes may be defined in this theater: the Near Eastern, which leads to the most important strategic areas of the Near East -- Mesopotamia, the oil-producing areas, the Bosporus-Dardanelles straits zone, the Suez Canal Zone and the Red Sea; and the Middle Eastern -- which includes India, Pakistan, Nepal and Ceylon.

The African Theater of Military Operations encompasses the entire African Continent with the contiguous seas and water areas of the Atlantic and Indian ocean basins.

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The African Theater of Military Operations may be divided into five large strategic areas: the Northern (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya), the Western (the coast of the Atlantic Ocean from Dakar to Brazzaville on the Congo River), the Central and Southern areas (the territory of Africa south of the mouth of the Congo River and Lake Nyasa) and the East African area.

The South American Theater of Military Operations includes all the nations and colonies in the territory of South America.

We may list three oceanic theaters of military operations -- the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Ocean theaters.

There are two other strategic areas not included in the theaters of military operations listed above -- the Arctic and Antarctic.

Taking into consideration the present alignment of forces in the international arena, including the fact that all socialist nations (except the Republic of Cuba) are located on the European and Asian continents and the chief political center and main economic base of modern imperialism is located on the American continent, as well as the fact that during a war modern strategic means of combat will be used against vitally important targets located on these continents, we believe that there will be one intercontinental theater of military operations -- the Eurasian-American.

This theater will include the European (Western), Eastern, North American, Atlantic and Pacific Ocean theaters of military operations, as well as the separate Arctic strategic area.

These are our thoughts on bringing the system of theaters of military operations more closely in agreeement with the conditions and nature of a future missile/nuclear war.

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